

On the Occasion of Dr. D.F. Roberts' Seventieth Birthday

Kenneth M. Crawford
(with apologies to Lewis Carroll)

"You are old, Dr. Roberts," the young man said,
"And your hair has grown white and quite thin.
Yet you still keep abreast of your fast-changing field
While some hardly know where to begin!"

"In my youth," said the doctor, "keeping up was a snap,
For the journals were fewer in number.
But now I just read that which keeps me awake,
And review those which cause me to slumber."

"You are old, Dr. Roberts, as I've mentioned before,
Yet your faculties still seem intact.
Is your mind still as sharp as the scalpel it was,
Or is intellect now just an act?"

"In my youth," said the doctor, "I'd sharpened my mind
On Darwin and Watson and Crick.
Then I sharpened my tongue in the academe wars
And I think until death both will stick."

"You are old, Dr. Roberts, I need hardly repeat,
And your name is well known in the field.
But time is the dragon which turns names to dust,
So what, of your work, is your shield?"

"In my youth," said the doctor, "I'd studied an isle
Where the males had once dropped to a few—
Giving rise to an excess of some rare alleles.
Thus did 'history' answer that clue!"

"You are old, Dr. Roberts, in the autumn of life,
And you've passed on your genes and your thoughts.
Which means it is time for your memoirs and wit—
So, sir, let us hear some bon mots!"

" 'You are old, you are old,' " mocked the doctor. "Indeed!"
(For his mind was still active and bright.)
"You have mispronounced French and have squandered my time.
Begone! I have papers to write!"

Correspondence to: Dr. Michael H. Crawford, Laboratory of Biological Anthropology, Department of Anthropology,
Lawrence, KS 66045. E-mail: CRAWFORD@KUHUB.CC.UKANS.EDU
Received 8 August 1997; accepted 9 August 1997.